

## THREE LETTERS OF JOHN ELIOT AND A BILL OF LADING OF THE "MAYFLOWER".

BY RENDEL HARRIS, M.A., D.LITT., ETC.

**A**MONGST a number of valuable autograph letters, formerly in the possession of Mrs. Luke, the authoress of the children's hymn, whose first line runs

I think when I read that sweet story of old,

there lay three letters of John Eliot, the Apostle of the North American Indians, addressed to the Rev. Jonathan Hanmer of Barnstaple, England, and containing some interesting details as to the work of Christianising and civilising the red man. With these letters there was a Bill of Lading of the goods supplied to John Eliot, by an English friend who took a keen interest in the work among the Indians, and communicated with John Eliot through Jonathan Hanmer. His name was Spragot. The main interest in this Bill of Lading lies in the fact that the goods were carried in the famous ship "Mayflower," which was in 1653 still trading with New England, but now under Puritan ownership and a Puritan captain, Master Thomas Webber of Boston. Thus the famous ship, which carried the idea of a religious republic westward, was still engaged in the North Atlantic trade thirty-three years after the Pilgrims landed on Cape Cod.

At first sight it seems as if her point of departure was Bristol ; but as we read the document through, it appears that the goods were shipped from London, having been (wholly or in part) forwarded thither from Bristol. Apparently Jonathan Hanmer's market for his cloth and canvas to clothe his Red Indians was Bristol, and the goods went thence, in the first instance, by road : or, perhaps, as there is a special charge for carting to the water-side, as well as for carriage from Bristol, the goods may have gone to London by some coasting vessel and been transferred in the Thames to the "Mayflower".

The documents are thus of the first importance ; they have a bearing on American History and upon the History of Missions. They have recently passed, by the agency of an American bookseller, at Boston, into the hands of a Transatlantic collector : while we should have been glad to retain them in England for an ornament to the proposed Mayflower University at Plymouth, their right place is clearly on the other side of the water. As to the source from which Mrs. Luke derived these documents, it is clear, from the fact that there are one or two other letters of Jonathan Hanmer in her collection, that they must be derived ultimately from Barnstaple and the Hanmer family. Jonathan Hanmer was a great Puritan leader and preacher in Barnstaple up to the time of the ejection in 1662, when he becomes the first Nonconformist minister of that town, to whom the Barnstaple Dissenters refer their parentage. It was known from other sources that there was a strong missionary element in the Puritan churches of the seventeenth century. Their associations for work of a religious character developed ultimately into the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. It is interesting to find the name of John Eliot connected in some degree with the very un-Puritanical S.P.G. Shall we call it a case of Apostolical Succession ? The churches of Puritan sympathy and tendency in the West of England appear to have been keenly interested in John Eliot's apostolical labours : contributions came in, not only from private persons like Mr. Spragot, but from communities like the church at Exeter of which Mr. Nichols was minister.

John Eliot designed to make his converts graduate in "civility" before admitting them to Church Fellowship, and so his mission involved town-planning, and the organisation of town-life. The centre of this town-life was the meeting-house, upon which the Indians were already engaged when Eliot wrote.

It is interesting to note that the Puritan zeal for learning was in evidence on both sides of the water. John Eliot begged books and bought books, both for himself and for a colleague of his named Mahon, and the Devonshire churches (Exeter in particular) were able to contribute the latest biblical literature. We notice that Eliot expected his goods to come either from Barnstaple or Bristol, and does not ask that they should be sent by the "Mayflower," but by any trading vessel carrying goods to Massachusetts Bay or to the Banks of New-

foundland. There is said to be a fourth letter in the collection, which relates to the ordination of John Eliot's son to the ministry. Of this I have no copy ; those which are here transcribed for me have occasional lacunæ, where a word could not be read. As I have not had access to the documents, and have not yet succeeded in getting a photograph of them, the blanks must be filled up by conjecture.

LETTER I Dated 19<sup>t</sup> of the 5<sup>t</sup>/52 (1652).

REVEREND AND DEARE S<sup>r</sup>

I have receiv<sup>d</sup> your let<sup>r</sup> dated March. 12.-51. wherein the Lord hath made you an unexpected instrument and messenger of encouragm<sup>t</sup>, and supply unto this work of the Lord among these poore Indians, and that it may be when expected help may be more slow : that so the Lord might please to show himself the only guide and . . . for his people in all their ways. I desire to acknowledg the Lord's . . . who hath never failed me in this work of his. It is meete that I should informe you of the state of this work that your prayers may be with the more particular faith and fervor, be breathed forth at the throne of grace, in the behalf of this work, and those who labour therein. I cannot be so particular as I would, by reason straights of time, the ship being quickly to sail after I have received your let<sup>s</sup>. if the Lord give you opportunity of going to Excestor, or of intercourse w<sup>h</sup> revn<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Nichols by him you may hear somewhat more than I can now wright unto your self, the revnd ministers, and christian people there having now these two years contributed towards this work, and by whose supply a great pt of the work for the civile p<sup>t</sup> in charges and expenses hath been carried on. After several years speaking to them, the Lord opened their hearts to desire baptism . . . and to desire church estate and ministry, whereby to enjoy all God's ordinances, and to enjoy cohabitation and civile govnm<sup>t</sup>, as subservient unto, and greatly conducing unto the spiritual ways and mercys—in this order they have been taught—they may have visible civility before they can rightly enjoy visible sanctities in ecclesiastical communion. Now we looked out a place fit for to begin a towne, where a . . . numb<sup>r</sup> of people might have subsistence togeth<sup>r</sup>—in the year, 50, we began that work through rich grace. in the year 51 in a day of fasting and prayer they entered into a covenant w<sup>th</sup> God and each oth<sup>r</sup> to be ruled by the Lord in all their affaires civilian

making the Word of God their only magna charta, for govment, laws, and all conversation and chose rulers of Bands—50. and of an hundred. —the platforms of wh holy govment of Gods own institution, I have sent over this yeare unto Mr Nicols for the reverend elders in exon, and if the Lord give you opportunity I should gladly wish your self might also have a sight of it, that I might receive your . . . animadvsions on it, but in my poor thoughts I apprehend it would be a mercy to England, if they should in this hour of time, take up that forme of govmt wh is a divine institution, and by wh christ should reigne over them, by the word of his mouth. but I forget my selfe. I am speaking of the Indians whom I desire to traine up to be the Lords people only, ruled by his Word in all things, and the Lord hath blessed them in this their govment and guided them in judgmt. This first yeare . . . and prepare them for holy church covenant whereby they give up themselves to be governed by the Lord ecclesiastically, in all his ordinances and church administrations, but I shall walk by good advice before I do this, they are now building themselves a meeting house wh when it is made, it may please the Lord to call them forth to be built a spiritual house unto the Lord.

Touching w<sup>t</sup> you say of my wrighting for a supply of books for my brother Mahn it is true I did so, but soone after the Lord was pleased to offer a comfortable supply both to him, and me also, for I bought two librarys of two ministers who left us and they are both paid for, by the Corporation in London, and my broth<sup>r</sup> Mahn hath bene possesd of his a good while, besides the revernd<sup>d</sup> elds. ministers of exon have sent unto us new supply, and this yeare they sent unto us the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the new annotations upon the whole bible, so through the riches of Gods bounty he is now supplied but w<sup>t</sup> particular books he may further want I cannot tell. S<sup>r</sup> you make mention of a liberal gift of a religious gentleman, whose name I hope I shall hereafter know that I may expresse my thankfullness in a few lines unto him and whereas you require to know in what comodity, it may be most suitably laid out I anse<sup>r</sup> in two comoditys chiefly first in strong linnen cloth, canvas, and oth<sup>r</sup> good hempen cloth and lokroms,<sup>1</sup> because in the hot sumors the Indians delight to goo in linnen, and work, if in any garm<sup>t</sup>, only a linnen garment, if they can get it.

<sup>1</sup> Locram is a coarse cloth imported from Brittany, from a town of that name.

2<sup>ly</sup> in red, blew, or white cottons, course and thick, some call it trading cloth w<sup>h</sup> is the courses<sup>r</sup> and some better. Only these two sorts of comoditys are best for the . . . the way of sending may be by ships from Barstable, who have often se hith<sup>r</sup>, or by some Bristol ships who also trade hith<sup>r</sup>, if by London then there is a faithfull friend of mine M<sup>r</sup> Butcher, who will conveigh any such things to me, but it may be the goods had better be taken up in your country, than to be bought in London S<sup>r</sup> I do also request this, that if any ships come from Barstable you would please to appoynt some or oth<sup>r</sup> discente and Godly men, able to judg wisely and . . . to set ap<sup>t</sup> so much time, as to see with his eyes, and heare with his owne ears how the matters are here and what is done among the Indians, and should he have a good allowance for his paines, it would tend much to the furtherance of o<sup>r</sup> work and comfort of your work, and may you please to communicate this my motion to rev<sup>nd</sup> Mr Nicols and consi<sup>dr</sup> w<sup>t</sup> to be done in that case, nay if some of the churches should send forth a minister, and oth<sup>r</sup> faithfull brethren on purpose to visit, and comfort, and incourage such a work, I see not, but it were a worthy work, and well becoming the Spirit of the gospel—but I can now go no further. I do humbly bless the Lord for the prayers that are made in all the Churches in the behalfe of this work, and us who labour in it. I beg for the continuance thereof and so commending you and all your holy labours unto the Lord, and to the blessing of his grace I r<sup>st</sup>

your unworthy fellow labourer

in the gospel of Christ

JOHN ELIOT.

Roxbury this 19<sup>t</sup>  
of the 5<sup>t</sup> 52.

## LETTER II, Dated 7<sup>th</sup> of the 8<sup>th</sup> Month 1652.

REVERN<sup>d</sup> AND MUCH RESPECTED IN CHRIST

I rec<sup>d</sup> let<sup>s</sup> from you full of love, both in acknowledgm<sup>t</sup> and incouragm<sup>t</sup> in this work of the Lord among the Indians to w<sup>h</sup> last I have by the former ship returned answ<sup>r</sup> according as you desired, but lest these let<sup>s</sup> should faile and miscary coming so far, and through so many hands before they can come at you, therefore I thought it necessary to write by this ship also, as I shall by the next likewise if the Lord give

optunity. your loving expression about books I thus answer<sup>d</sup> t<sup>t</sup> through the goodnesse of God, wants are well supplied by the purchase of two librarys one for my broth<sup>r</sup> Mahon, the other for my selfe, as also Revernd<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Nicols of Excetor w<sup>th</sup> the rest of the revernd ministers there and christian people have made a good supply unto us, both in books blessed be the Lord and blessed be they. for the fittest disposal of t<sup>t</sup> 5<sup>g</sup> you mention, because o<sup>r</sup> Indians are now come to cohabitation and labour, they much delight in linnen to work in, in the summer especially, if therefore it be laide out in good canvas and other good strong linnen for shirts, and some for some cotton about head cloathes etc. it will best accomodate us for the present—unless some be laide out in thick warme white blanket cloth wh I think is plentyfully made in your country, such things will best suit us. for the way of sending it, I desire it may be by your . . . shipping, and if none be bound for the Bay of Massachusett yet if any be bound for the I<sup>ld</sup> of Shoals, the great fishing place of N.E. it may be safely conveyehd unto me for the minister who p<sup>r</sup>cheth there is named M<sup>r</sup> Brock, a godly man, unto whom the care being comited I doubt not but he will carefully send them unto me, or if they be bound to any other port with us, let<sup>s</sup> and goods sent unto me who am of Roxbury, will easily be notified, and conveyehd. if anybody of trust have the care . . . comited to them the present state of o<sup>r</sup> busynesse is through the grace of christ come up to this, that upon the 13<sup>th</sup> day of this month (if God will) we have a day of fasting and prayer, wherein we shall call forth sundry Indians to make confession of Jesus Christ his truth and grace whose confessions, if they, to charity appear to be such as were not revealed to them by flesh and blood, but by the fath<sup>r</sup> then we shall proceed to build them into a visible constituted church for the enjoyment of Christ in all his holy ordinances.

Now this businesse is pressing on, and filleth me so w<sup>th</sup> occupa<sup>n</sup> as t<sup>t</sup> I cannot attend much to writing Sr I earnest beg your prayers, and the prayers of all the people of the Lord, and so comending you, and all your holy labours unto the Lord's blessing and mercy—I r<sup>t</sup>

your affectionate broth<sup>r</sup> and

fellow labourer in

the Lords vinyard

JOHN ELIOT.

Roxbury this 7<sup>t</sup> of the 8<sup>t</sup> month 1652.

S<sup>r</sup>

in my form<sup>r</sup> let<sup>r</sup> I was bold to move t<sup>t</sup> if the Christian people who are now contributors to this good work of the Lord would please to send over some godly messenger who may see w<sup>th</sup> his eyes what is done . . . w<sup>h</sup> they have bestowed, it may much tend to their satisfaction, and encouragem<sup>t</sup> in so great and good a work as this is.

1653.

Invoice of Goods Sente on y<sup>e</sup> May. Flower of Boston (Master Thos. Webber) for Boston in New England consigned onto Mr. John Elliott Pastor of y<sup>e</sup> Church of Roxbury fr Mr. Jonathan Hamner, y<sup>e</sup> Cost and Chardges, viz.

	£	s.	d.
# 1 Ballott of Canvas N <sup>r</sup> 3 q <sup>r</sup> 180 Awnds Cost . . .	010	14	09
# 1 Ballott of Canvas n <sup>r</sup> 6 q <sup>r</sup> : 210 awnds cost . . .	016	04	04
# 100 yards of Course Dowlis <sup>1</sup> at 10½ <sup>d</sup> p y <sup>d</sup> is . . .	004	07	06
# Chardges paide on those Goods at Bristoll is . . .	000	05	08
	031	12	03
2 qts of Tourkinge Cloth of 45 yds: ys. white cost . . .	16	00	00
# p <sup>d</sup> for canvas and packinge y <sup>e</sup> Tourkinge <sup>2</sup> cloth . . .	000	05	06
# p <sup>d</sup> for Cartidge to y <sup>e</sup> Water Side . . .	000	00	08
p <sup>d</sup> for Carryadge of y <sup>e</sup> Canvas from Bristoll . . .	000	14	00
p <sup>d</sup> for makeinge bills of entry and clearing y <sup>e</sup> Canvas at ye Custome House . . .	000	03	06
p <sup>d</sup> for Custome of 50 ells of Canvas, entered short . . .	000	02	08
p <sup>d</sup> for portidge, cartidge, craneidge, boatidge and warfidge, and warehouse roome for y <sup>e</sup> Canvas . . .	000	04	08
# p <sup>d</sup> for Warehouse rooms, Warfidge, portidge Craneidge and boatidge for y <sup>e</sup> 2 q <sup>rs</sup> Tourk-Cloth . . .	000	04	08
# p <sup>d</sup> for freight, primadge, and . . . . .	002	11	00
p <sup>d</sup> Severall petty chardges on those goods . . . . .	000	00	08
Sum is . . . . .	051	19	07
p <sup>d</sup> out of mony Nuttall forming a Certificate fr y <sup>e</sup> Shippinge out y <sup>e</sup> 2 ballotts of Canvas at shippinge office in london . . . . .	00	00	06
	52	00	1

<sup>1</sup> This again is Breton fabric from Dulas in Brittany: it is the cloth that made Falstaff so angry: "Dowlas, filthy dowlas".

<sup>2</sup> Cloth dyed light blue, the Turkey blue of the day: the form is from the Italian *turchino*.

LETTER III, Dated 29<sup>t</sup> of the 6<sup>t</sup> —54.

REVEN<sup>d</sup> AND MUCH RESPECTED IN THE LORD

That liberal gift of that Christian Gentleman, Mr. Spragot, and his religious familie w<sup>th</sup> your owne exceeding great love, care, paine and travaile about the same I did by the blessing of the Lord receive, safe and in good condition, in the end of the yeare 53 w<sup>h</sup> the Lord sent me at such a season, as t<sup>t</sup> it was a singular comfort unto us, and furtherance of the work, provision for winter clothing and a support to the work all this spring, untill such time as the Lord affordeth us some more supplys and I doo send not only my thanks for all this love, but also an account of the improv<sup>t</sup> thereof unto the ends you appoynted the same and I have sent here inclosed one account to your people and the same I have sent to M<sup>r</sup> Spegot himselfe inclosed in his let<sup>t</sup> w<sup>h</sup> I request you to deliv<sup>r</sup> to him It pleaseth God thus to owne and blesse the work, they come forward in civility there is in them a great measure of natural informity and ingeniosity only it is drowned in their wild and rude manner of living, but by culture, order, govern<sup>t</sup> and religion they begin to be furbished up, and drawn forth unto some good employ<sup>ts</sup>, and by Gods blessing I hope they will be in these civile respects raised to some good improv<sup>t</sup>. Religion is on the gaineing hand (I blesse the Lord) though in Church estate and affaires of ecclesiastical polity they come on but slowly but in these matters they doo as they are order<sup>d</sup> and guided by counsel, and not according to their owne notions. I hope you have seen their confessions w<sup>h</sup> they made in the yeare 52, and the reasons of our proceeding no further at that time, in the yeare 53 I did not move at all that way for some special reasons, only some . . . against this present yeare This yeare 54 we have had anoth<sup>r</sup> meeting about it : viz. for the examination of the Indians in poynt of knowledge in the doctrinal pt of religion, they were examined principally by the Elders of the churches about us, as also by any other Christian man, who thought good to propound any question to them, as some did for it was an open and free conference, t<sup>t</sup> so t<sup>r</sup> might be the fuller satisfaction given to all t<sup>t</sup>. desired the same in conclusion wherof the Elders did give testimony of their good satisfaction in what they had received from them, but a more particular relation of this days meeting, I have sent over to the Corporation to be published togeth<sup>r</sup> w<sup>th</sup>

the present state we stood in, touching o<sup>r</sup> furth<sup>r</sup> guiding in gathering them into a church estate and covenant unto w<sup>h</sup> I must make bold to refer you for fuller information. Also the laste yeare I sent over the Indians thanks unto the Christian people of Engi: for their love, also a relation of some judgm<sup>ts</sup>, as the rulers have executed upon sinners w<sup>h</sup> I hope are published, wherin may be seen their care to leade a conversation according to the word of God, and the light they have received S<sup>r</sup> my times are filled w<sup>th</sup> occupa<sup>n</sup>, and cannot enlarge furth<sup>r</sup>. I intreat the continuance of your prayers unto the Lord for us all and for me and so comending you and all your holy labours unto the Lord I rest

Your loving broth<sup>r</sup> and  
fellow labourer in the  
Lords vinyarde  
JOHN ELIOT.

Roxbury this 29<sup>t</sup> of the 6<sup>t</sup>. 54.